

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-17

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 PM-09 NSC-10 SS-15 RSC-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03 USIA-12 PRS-01 ACDA-19

GAC-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 MC-02 RSR-01 /103 W

----- 130527

R 061400 Z APR 73

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6907

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 2758

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP CO

SUBJECT: VISIT OF SECRETARY OF THE ARMY AND CHIEF OF STAFF

REF: BOGOTA 1291

1. VISIT OF SECRETARY FROEHLKE AND GENERAL ABRAMS WENT WELL ENOUGH ALTHOUGH I WAS CHAGRINED THAT THEY WERE NOT AWARE OF RESERVATIONS EXPRESSED REFTEL. IF THEY HAD COME HERE ABLE TO SAY SOMETHING ABOUT NEW POLICY DIRECTIONS OR TO MAKE COMMITMENTS ON THE EQUIPMENT WE KNOW THE COLOMBIAN WANT, THE VALUE OF THE VISIT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENHANCED SUSBTANTIALY.

2. THE CALL THE SECRETARY AND GEN ABRAMS MADE ON THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE APRIL 2 ILLUSTRATES POINTS I HAVE PREVIOUSLY MADE. THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE SURROUNDED BY HIS CHIEF OFFICERS OPENED THE MEETING, AFTER APPROPRIATE COURTESIES, BYT STATING HE WISHED TO SPEAK TO THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY AND THE CHIEF OF STAFF AS A FIREND AND HE WOULD, THEREFORE, SPEAK FRANKLY AND HONESTLY. HE THEN ITEMIZED A SERIES OF GRIEVANCES COLOMBIAN MILITARY HAD TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES AS FOLLOWS: (1) WHILE THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY ALWAYS LOOK FIRST TO THE UNITED STATES FOR THEIR EQUIPMENT NEEDS, THEY HAVE FREQUENTLY BEEN DISAPPOINTED. THE MINISTER STATED THE ONLY REASON THE COLOMBIANS HAVE FRENCH MIRAGE AIRCRAFT IS BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT OR COULD NOT RESPOND
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IN TIMELY MANNER TO THE COLOMBIAN REQUEST FOR U. S. AIRCRAFT.
(2) COLOMBIA REQUIRES VESSELS TO GUARD ITS COASTS AND HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN WHAT IT NEEDED FROM THE UNITED STATES. IN THIS CONNECTION THE MINISTER NOTED THAT " WE COULD NOT ACQUIRE SHIPS FROM THE UNITED STATES OF THE TYPE OUR NEIGHBOR RECEIVED". (AN OBVIOUS REFERENCE TO VENEZUELA AND SUBMARINES.)

(3) OF THE FIVE MILLION DOLLARS CREDIT THE U. S. GRANTED TO COLOMBIA IN 1971, THE COLOMBIANS HAVE RECEIVED ONLY 40 PERCENT AND NOTHING FOR 1972 OR 1973. (4) THE MINISTER DID NOT COMPLAIN ABOUT THE COST OF THE TEN PERCENT DEPOSIT REQUIREMENT FOR TRAINING BUT DID POINT OUT THAT BECAUSE COLOMBIA AND THE UNITED STATES OPERATE ON DIFFERENT FISCAL YEARS, IT HAS BEEN IMPOSSIBLE TO OBTAIN AN ACCURATE STATEMENT OF FUTURE TRAINING COSTS IN ORDER THAT COLOMBIA CAN BUDGET FOR THE NEXT YEAR' S TRAINING. (5) THE MINISTER CRITICIZED THE UNITED STATES FOR INORDINATE DELAYS IN FILLING COLOMBIA' S REQUEST FOR EQUIPMENT. THE MINISTER LAID SPECIAL STRESS ON THE IMPORTANCE THE COLOMBIANS ATTACH TO OBTAINING FIVE HELICOPTERS TO USE IN COUNTER- GUERRILLA OPERATIONS. COMMENT: SOME OF MINISTERS COMPLAINTS UNDOUBTEDLY JUSTIFIED; OTHERS MUCH LESS SO. WE QUESTION FOR EXAMPLE HIS 40 PERCENT FIGURE FOR 1971 FMS CREDITS.

3. SECRETARY FROEHLKE RESPONDED IN GENERAL TERMS TO THE MINISTERS PRESENTATION POINTING OUT THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS THE OBLIGATION TO RE- SUPPLY ITS OWN TROOPS FIRST. HE DID ASSERT THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE A MORE EFFICIENT SYSTEM OF SUPPLYING MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO LATIN AMERICA. GENERAL ABRAMS RESPONDED TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE BY STATING THAT " WE ARE HERE BECAUSE THE ARMY IS CONCERNED THAT OUR PERFORMANCE IN LATIN AMERICA IS NOT IN TUNE WITH PRESIDENT NIXON' S POLICY AS WE UNDERSTAND IT". THE GENERAL STATED THAT IN ORDER TO DO THIS PRIORITIES MUST BE CHANGED AND HE GAVE ASSURANCE THAT PRIORITIES WOULD BE CHANGED.

4. THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY AND GENERAL ABRAMS MET WITH PRESIDENT PASTRANA ON APRIL 3. NO SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES PERTINENT TO THE MILITARY WERE RAISED DURING THE MEETING, ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENT THANKED THE VISITORS FOR OUR HELP IN OBTAINING COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT FOR COUNTER- GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES AND POINTED OUT THE UTILITY OF HELICOPTERS IN THIS TYPE OF OPERATION.
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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 APR 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BOGOTA02758
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: RR
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730435/aaaahuii.tel
Line Count: 119
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 73 BOGOTA 1291
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 JAN 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17-Jan-2002 by collinp0>; APPROVED <07 FEB 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> gwr 971204
Subject: VISIT OF SECRETARY OF THE ARMY AND CHIEF OF STAFF
TAGS: OVIP, CO
To: ARA
SECSTATE WASHDC
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005